

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 /074 W

----- 021266

R 241105Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6587

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION NATO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MT, IT

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT LEONE'S STATE VISIT TO MALTA:
THE FINAL INDIGNITY

REF: (A) VALLETTA A-67, DECEMBER 12, 1975 (NOTAL);
(B) VALLETTA 1435; (C) VALLETTA 1320 (NOTAL);
(D) VALLETTA 0585 (NOTAL)

1. GOM PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF'S GAUCHE TREATMENT OF
ITALIAN PRESIDENT LEONE DURING THE LATTER'S DECEMBER 5-6,
1975, STATE VISIT TO MALTA (REFTEL B) WAS CAPPED BY
THE HAM-HANDED WAY IN WHICH THE OFFICIAL SPEECH AT
THE CEREMONY AWARDED PRESIDENT LEONE MEMBERSHIP IN
MALTA'S NEW "SOCIETY OF HONOR" WAS FILLED WITH
REFERENCES TO COLONEL GADHAFI. THE AWARD SPEECH,
DELIVERED BY PRESIDENT MAMO, ENDED WITH
THE SURPRISING STATEMENT THAT THE GOM WAS CON-
FERRING ITS "HIGHEST HONOR" ON THE "LEADERS OF THE
TWO COUNTRIES WHICH ARE OUR CLOSEST FRIENDS"
(I.E., LIBYA-FIRST, AND ITALY-SECOND).

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2. THERE HAD BEEN NO REFERENCE, PRIOR TO THE CEREMONY HONORING LEONE, TO THE COMPARABLE "AWARD" TO GADHAFI. THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR IN MALTA WAS "INFORMED" PRIVATELY BY THE GOM, ONLY A DAY BEFORE PRESIDENT LEONE'S ARRIVAL, THAT GADHAFI HAS "ALSO RECEIVED" THE AWARD, WHICH THE AMBASSADOR UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE DURING A PREVIOUS VISIT BY MINTOFF TO LIBYA. BUT THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE PRESENTATION TO GADHAFI ACTUALLY HAD BEEN MADE. THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE ANNOYANCE AMONG THE OPPOSITION NATIONALIST PARTY AND THE ANTI-MINTOFF PRESS OVER THE SUBSEQUENT PUBLIC EMBARRASSMENT TO PRESIDENT LEONE AND THE ITALIAN DELEGATION WHEN MINTOFF INSISTED ON THE MENTION OF GADHAFI'S AWARD DURING THE CEREMONY HONORING PRESIDENT LEONE. DESPITE THIS LINKAGE WITH GADHAFI, THE ITALIAN SIDE DID NOT PROTEST, AND PRESIDENT LEONE ACCEPTED HIS AWARD IN GOOD GRACE.

3. MALTESE OBSERVERS WHO QUESTIONED THE FACT OF THE "AWARD" TO GADHAFI WERE CONFIRMED IN THEIR SKEPTICISM A WEEK AFTER THE ITALIAN STATE VISIT ENDED WITH THE MALTA GOVERNMENT GAZETTE, ON DECEMBER 12, PUBLISHED TWO BACKDATED NOTICES. THE FIRST, "DATED" DECEMBER 4, STATED THAT GADHAFI HAD BEEN MADE AN HONORARY MEMBER OF MALTA'S SOCIETY OF HONRO (GIEH IR-REPUBBLIKA) "WITH EFFECT FROM 5TH DECEMBER 1975." THE SECOND, "DATED" DECEMBER 5, AFFORDED THE SAME HONOR TO PRESIDENT LEONE "WITH EFFECT FROM 6 TH DECEMBER 1975." TO DATE, THERE STILL HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE GOM AS TO WHEN (IF EVER) GADHAFI ACTUALLY WAS GIVEN THE BADGE AND SCROLL OF THE SOCIETY, WHICH IN PRESIDENT LEONE'S CASE WAS BESTOWED ON DECEMBER 6.

4. COMMENT: THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR WAS GRIEVOUSLY MISLED BY THE GOM CONCERNING MINTOFF'S STAGE MANAGING OF THE GADHAFI AND LEONE "AWARDS".
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BRUSHING ASIDE ANY REGARD FOR ITALIAN SENSITIVITIES, MINTOFF WAS OBVIOUSLY DETERMINED THAT GADHAFI WOULD BE THE FIRST ON THE LIST OF THOSE WHO HAVE PROVIDED "DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO MALTA," DESPITE THE PROTOCOL REQUIREMENTS OF THE ITALIAN STATE VISIT, A VISIT WHICH MINTOFF HIMSELF FERVENTLY SOUGHT FOR HIS OWN POLITICAL ADVANTAGE. SMITH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS, HONOR AWARDS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 DEC 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975VALLET01497
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750447-0392
From: VALLETTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751213/aaaaalbw.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 VALLETTA A-67
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 JUN 2003 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <10 JUL 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT LEONE'S STATE VISIT TO MALTA: THE FINAL INDIGNITY
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, MT, IT, (LEONE, GIOVANNI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006